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Eggplant

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USU STUDENT ORGANIC FARM

September 5, 2011

Newsletter

Vol. 2 Issue 17



We gave lots of love to the eggplants this year ☺

Conquering the Bounty

Here are a few simple ideas for tasty eggplant dishes:

- ✓ Grill or broil eggplant. Brush eggplant with garlic and olive oil to keep it from drying out.
- ✓ For a beautiful dish, stuff eggplants as you would sweet peppers with your favorite stuffed peppers recipe.
- ✓ Peel and cube eggplant then sauté in olive oil and garlic: try adding basil, mint, cilantro, or other strong fresh herbs for flavor. Or add bell peppers, onion, zucchini, cubed potato, shallots, and whatever else you wish for a tasty dish.
- ✓ Make eggplant lasagna Just slice the eggplant lengthwise into 1/2 inch slices, brush with olive oil, sprinkle with sea salt, and roast at 400 for 15-20 minutes. Use the eggplant just as you would sheets of pasta with your favorite recipe.
- ✓ Eggplants are great stir-fried. Add eggplant slices to your next stir-fry and serve with rice.
- ✓ Purée roasted eggplant, garlic, tahini, lemon juice and olive oil. Use it as a homemade dip for vegetables or as a sandwich filling.

Article by: Elisabeth Inman

Featured Vegetable: Eggplant

Eggplants come in many different colors, shapes and sizes. Although we most often see the dark purple oblong ones, the eggplant was actually named for a white, egg-shaped variety. Each type has a little different texture and flavor and can range from very small to quite large. Generally, larger eggplants with more seeds are more bitter than smaller ones. Eggplants belong to the nightshade family and are related to tomatoes, sweet peppers, and potatoes. They grow similarly to tomatoes, hanging from a vine on a plant near the ground.

Eggplants have a unique flavor and spongy texture. The flavor cannot be matched by any other vegetable and therefore, the eggplant is not best substituted in any recipe although it often performs as a complimentary flavor in dishes. Its history shows that because of its dark, rich purple color and sometimes bitter flavor, it was often used as a decorative plant rather than as a food.

Store eggplant in the refrigerator and use as soon as possible as the inside of an eggplant will become soft and bitter within a few days. Eggplants should feel heavy for their size and be shiny and firm regardless of the color and size. The stem of a fresh eggplant should be a vivid green and indicates the freshness by its color. To prepare, wash and trim the stem end. Peel tough-skinned eggplants for the best results.

Article by: Elisabeth Inman

Eggplant Dip

Adapted from Better Homes and Gardens Recipe Collection

This recipe is a simple, delicious way to prepare eggplant. Enjoy with warm flatbread or corn chips.

4 lb. eggplants (about 1 gal. diced)	4 red or green sweet peppers
4 garlic bulbs	2/3 C lemon juice
3/4 C extra-virgin olive oil	1/2 C snipped fresh parsley
4 tsp. salt	1/4 C snipped fresh oregano

Wash and trim eggplants and peppers. Cut into 1/2 to 1-inch pieces. Cut off tops of garlic bulbs and remove loose outer layers. Place eggplants and garlic bulbs in a shallow roasting pan* and drizzle 1/4 cup of olive oil over them and sprinkle with salt. Roast 20 minutes, uncovered, stirring once. Add peppers to pan, stirring to combine and roast, uncovered, 20 minutes more or until vegetables are tender, stirring once. Remove from oven and let cool.

Transfer eggplants and peppers to large glass bowl. Remove garlic pulp and mash. Add remaining 1/2 cup of olive oil and lemon juice to garlic. Add oil mixture, parsley, and oregano to eggplant mixture. Toss to combine. Serve immediately or cover and chill mixture for up to three days. You can also transfer to a freezer container and freeze for up to 3 months. Either way, let mixture stand at room temperature for 30 minutes before serving. Serve with flatbread or chips.

*For more tips on perfectly roasted vegetables check out the "Fabulous Flavor" article from the July 11, 2011 kohlrabi issue.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The newsletters are now online!

Find them at:

http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/student_orgfarm/

Elderberries are ripe! They are good for jams and pies (not so good fresh). If you would like some, let us know via email.

We will be selling organic corn every afternoon the week of Sept 12th. Come get some if you would like more or just tell your friends! 3 cobs for \$1

Email us your favorite recipes using the veggies in your basket! Who doesn't love a tried and true recipe?

organicfarm@aggiemail.usu.edu

NEW Volunteer hours:

Tuesday and Friday: 4:30-6:30pm

Thursdays: 9:30am-12:30pm

Saturdays 7:00-1:00pm (harvest)

Eggplant can be a little spongy sometimes. To get rid of this sponginess, peel and cube it, salt, mix so all surfaces have salt on them, and let sit for about 30 minutes. Rinse under cold water.

Organic Techniques:

Herb Container Garden

Potted herbs are so pretty, inexpensive, and they require little work. What you need is a sunny area to put your pot, an appropriate sized pot (12" pot can hold 3 plants), potting media that allows excellent drainage (I found mine at Anderson's on Center Street), fertilizer (fish emulsion is an organic method that works fabulously), and container-friendly herbs. This includes herbs like basil, chamomile, cilantro, parsley, mint, and tarragon, just to name a few.

You can start your herbs either from seed, transplants, or cuttings. Starting from seed can be tricky, but if you water consistently you are likely to have success. An AMAZING resource for herb container gardening is: <http://extension.usu.edu/yardandgarden/hm/gardening-basics>. It's super easy!

Article by: Brianne Sherwood

For more information about the USU Student Organic Farm or CSA shares visit:

www.usu.edu/organicfarms

On the Farm News

Ah, life on the farm. This past week was the beginning of school and it was a bit of an acrobat's trick to juggle it and farming responsibilities! But the farm is a beautiful place to take a break from the hectic-ness that campus can be and we interns are enjoying the refuge it offers.

Along with the start of school was an influx of new volunteers (mostly students) helping out with harvest and we really appreciate them, especially as half of our interns have moved on; one to Salt Lake and two to Japan for an agriculture study abroad! We'll miss them and wish them the best. We welcome all CSA members who would like to come help with harvests, now that we are fewer in number and the harvests won't stop being just as fruitful for the rest of the season! We harvest the evening before pickups, starting at 4:30 pm on Tuesdays and Saturday morning starting at 7 am.

Also, elderberries (see picture on this page) are available THIS WEEK so be sure to stop by and get some before they rot.

Vegetables to expect next week: Potatoes, corn, garlic, tomatoes, peppers, squash, basil, carrots, cantaloupe, tatsoi, pak choi, beets, kale, chard

Article by: Amanda Hawks



Fabulous Flavors: Tips & Techniques

Be Partial to Pesto

By: Tamara Steinitz Vitale, USU Dept of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Food Sciences

Pesto is a very flavorful but potent herb mixture. A little goes a long way! Once you try it, you'll be hooked.

Use pesto on pasta, pizza, or as a spread on bread or sandwiches. Pesto and tomatoes are a match made in heaven – try chopping up some perfectly ripened, sun-warmed tomatoes and marinating them with a few spoonfuls of pesto, then tossing with some hot, cooked pasta. Yum!

Pesto can be kept in the refrigerator for a day or so. Cover it tightly in a narrow container; when it is exposed to air the surface blackens. Just stir it – the flavor or quality is not affected. If you want to freeze it to enjoy next winter (you'll be glad you did...), try this method:

Cover a cookie sheet with waxed paper or plastic wrap. Use a 1/3-1/2 C scoop to plop "blobs" of pesto onto the sheet. Place in the freezer until frozen, then put the pesto into zip-lock freezer bags or containers. Each "blob" is the perfect amount for a batch of pasta or a pizza.

Basil Pesto

3 C fresh basil leaves, loosely packed
1/3 C pine nuts (substitute almonds if desired)
1/2 C extra virgin olive oil
1/3 C parmesan cheese, grated
1-2 cloves fresh garlic, chopped
1/2 t salt

Place all ingredients in food processor or blender; pulse until uniform consistency, but with some texture remaining.